

DID YOU KNOW???

FLAGGERS PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN TRAFFIC SAFETY

Flaggers, flagperson, or flagmen as we used to know it, are vital to both vehicle safety and to worker safety. Unfortunately, drivers are too often annoyed by them when approaching a work zone or encountering a flagger when motoring about.

Our vast infrastructure, roads and highways included, need repair from time to time, and generally it's impossible to take the road totally out of service to perform the necessary maintenance; thus, highway departments usually perform the work while keeping it open to traffic, albeit with delays that are inconvenient to the public.

Section 115-b (1) of Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) defines a flagperson as "any person employed by or on behalf of the state, a county, city, town or village, a public authority, a local authority, or a public utility company, or the agent or contractor of any such entity, who has been assigned to control or direct traffic on public highways in connection with any construction, survey, and/or maintenance work being performed". Two other sub-sections cover railroad personnel dealing with railroad crossings, and operators of escort vehicles assigned to control traffic in conjunction with the movement of oversized loads on public highways.

Section 1102 of VTL states: "No person shall fail or refuse to comply with any lawful order or direction of any police officer or flagperson or other person duly empowered to regulate traffic." Sanctions for violating section 1102 are fines of up to \$150 (fines are doubled if in a marked work zone) plus applicable surcharges and up to 15 days in jail for the first offense. This violation is worth two points on your license.

Although drivers never like to be stopped or held up by flaggers, it is a necessary evil, as traffic cannot be allowed to flow normally while construction is in progress. Sometimes the inconvenience is minor but sometimes it is lengthy. Just talk with someone that travels I-81 in the Scranton – Wilkes Barre, PA area – construction along that corridor has been ongoing for many years. And, frequent travelers to Montreal are faced with complete highway closures, some for several years, while that city and the Province of Quebec rebuild much of their aging highway system, which was built just prior to Expo '67, the world's fair held in that city in 1967. That makes much of the expressways in Montreal 50-60 years old and in dire need of re-construction.

One last important point to be made in this article is the role of private businesses engaged in any job requiring use of some type of heavy equipment. A good example is a driveway paving company contracted to pave or re-pave a driveway, be it for a residential owner or a commercial establishment. The job necessitates moving paving machines and rollers to the job site, unloading them, followed by the paving job. During the few minutes it takes to unload and reload the equipment, you may encounter a worker trying to safely assist the unloading and loading while trying to allow drivers to pass safely. They deserve your understanding and courtesy just as much as authorized flaggers. As a driver, please, just be patient – you won't be held up as long as it seems, and it's all about safety – your safety and the safety of the workers.

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